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ONS FOR THE LENTEN SEASON

Y JOHN HENRY HARMS

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ASH WEDNESDAY—March 10

Read: St. Luke 15: 11-32

St. Luke 15: 18 "I will arise and go to my father and I will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before Thee."

WE do not need to go as far as the Prodigal went to do our sinning or to get into all the trouble he got into. It is possible to do our sinning nearer home than that. The "far country" is not a matter of mileage so much as it is a matter of morals. We run away from God with our affections, not our feet. The elder brother was as bad a sinner, with his anger, as the prodigal, although he never left his father's house.

This is an honest confession we all can make—I have sinned. Maybe we have not sinned so grossly that men will notice it. All sinners do not land in pigsties. Some live in luxury and fare sumptuously every day. But sin, whether clothed in purple or in rags, is never hidden from God.

We must do something about our sins, get them pardoned, taken away. There is no getting into the Heavenly Father's House with our sins unrepented of, with our sins unforgiven.

These Lenten days remind us of the great provision God has made for us in Christ and His atoning death upon the Cross. The prayer of the season, and of all seasons, is: God, have mercy on me a sinner!

O Lord, ever merciful, who knowest how frail we are, work within us true repentance, forgive us those things whereof our conscience is afraid, and grant us those good gifts which we are not worthy to ask; in Jesus' Name. Amen.

THURSDAY—March 11

Read: 1 Timothy 1: 1-15

1 Timothy 1: 15 "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."

HERE is a saying to be celebrated, worthy of all acceptation, praise. And it is a saying that cannot be disputed, or subjected to any question as to its veracity. It is a faithful saying, sure as God Himself, that Christ Jesus came to save sinners.

Think of a sinning world against the background of this assertion. Where is the world going now, whither is it headed? Such a world as ours? What is the hope of getting things straight again? Where is there salvation for such a world?

Is it in science? Will economics save us? Will secular education pull us up out of the awful mire of strife and hate? It looks as if there is nothing left but the spirit of revenge; as if the only thing the nations have in common is things to fight with.

It is to our world and all its people, to us and our fellowmen, this saying sounds today. The only Saviour is Jesus Christ. Nothing is ever settled right unless He settles it. Nobody is ever saved unless He saves them.

There must be some of us, right now, celebrating Him, as the sinner's Saviour and the Saviour of a sinning world.

O Creator and Ruler of mankind, look in mercy on us and help us in our distress. Deliver us from our present sorrows and lead all nations to the love of Him whom Thou hast sent; ever Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

FRIDAY—March 12

Read: Psalm 73

Psalm 73: 28 "It is good for me to draw nigh to God.'

DO we always know what is good for us?

There are some things about which it can be said that they are good for some and bad for others, like articles of diet, or entertainment, or exercise. "One man's meat is another man's poison." But there are some things, of spiritual health and growth, which are good for everyone, no matter who they are or however placed in life. They are the practices of religion. They are such things as fearing, loving, trusting God—as drawing near to Him.

This is the call of Lent to us. It is that holy season of the Church's year when we turn to God in special consecrations, in public worship, private prayers, and works of charity. Certainly we do not think of things like these as limited to Lent. They belong to all the months and seasons of the year. Lent is a way we have of emphasizing what is good for us, and the best Lent is the Lent that lasts throughout the year.

Those who faithfully use these days to brighten up their sense of blessing in their Christian faith will not miss the good of it—of drawing near to God.

Lord, be gracious and draw us to Thyself. Give us a sincere and glad desire for such things as those in which Thou delightest. Whatsoever Thou withholdest help us cheerfully to resign and whatsoever Thou commandest help us faithfully to perform; through Christ. Amen.

SATURDAY—March 13

Read: St. Matthew 11: 20-30

St. Matthew 11: 21 "If the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes."

WHAT more could God have done than He has done, to make us turn to Him and live according to His will?

His mighty works are everywhere before our eyes. He has shown Himself to us in nature and in grace. We have seen Him working mightily in the lives of people whom we have known, turning them from darkness into light and from the power of Satan unto Himself. We have seen miracles in our times, miracles of grace! We have beheld the glory of the Lord, especially in the life and teachings of the Saviour. God did a mighty work in Jesus, providing us a great salvation, in the Cross. God so loved the world!

Surely the works of God deserve response. Shall God call in vain to us? Shall His love be unrequited? Is it possible that you and I will look idly and dully on at the wonderful works of God? no thanksgiving, no surrender of our lives to Him?

Unto whom much is given, of him shall much be required. Better not see goodness than to be indifferent to it, having seen it.

Open our eyes, O Lord, to behold Thy wonders. When our love grows cold, rekindle it; when our faith is weak, revive it. Persuade us by the Gospel of Thy Son, that we may live in patience, charity, and well-doing; for His sake. Amen.

FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT—March 14

Read: Matthew 4: 1-11

St. Matthew 4: 11 "Then the Devil leaveth Him, and behold, angels came and ministered unto Him."

GOOD riddance!

Getting rid of devils is one of our major employments—getting rid of angers, and suspicions, and depressions, and ugly moods and tempers, and coldness of disposition toward the worship and work of God. There are many devils to be rid of! And maybe you have a particular devil of your own!

For one thing, we must expect temptations. They come to all alike. They came to Jesus. We must not think when we are tempted that we are wicked. Satan does not bother wicked people. And the sin is not in being tempted. The sin is in yielding to it. Count it not strange that you are tempted. The worst thing that could happen to us is that the Devil should be satisfied with us and should leave us alone.

Get rid of him! By letting the angels in! Devils do not stay around where angels are—angel thoughts, angel people, angel actions and intentions. God has legions of them to send us, when we pray. For it is by our prayers, by the Spirit of this Wrestler in the desert, that the devil leaveth us and angels come to minister to us.

O most holy and loving Father, who knowest our hearts and seest our temptations, enable us by Thy grace to resist the evil and send Thy angels of deliverance to save us in our time of need; through Jesus, our Lord. Amen.

MONDAY—March 15

Read: Hebrews 13: 1-8

Hebrews 13: 2 "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares."

THAT hardly means that we should leave our doors unlocked for any stranger who happens to be in need of bed and board. Doubtless in the days of the Apostle it was necessary to keep open house to all and sundry, since there was lack of lodging and entertainment.

However, we still have the stranger with us. Sometimes he drifts into our churches, asking to be allowed to worship with us. Surely we will bid him welcome, lest he become not only a stranger to ourselves but also to the Lord.

We may not be able to offer hospitable homes but we can always offer hospitable hearts. We can help, with our contributions, to establish places where the poor can be provided for, and sick tended, the wayward loved and led again to virtue—homes, hospitals, agencies, for the care of the weak and underprivileged. These are the warm-hearted hospitalities of the Church. Their guests are all likely strangers to us, yet in helping with our offerings to entertain them we are entertaining angels unawares.

Best of all, with our charities, we entertain the Lord. "I was a stranger and ye took me in."

God of grace, make us merciful toward Thy needy ones, the lonely, the discouraged who dread tomorrow, and all those whose road is up-hill and hard and wearisome. May we find angels in the good we do; in Jesus' Name. Amen.

TUESDAY—March 16

Read: Hebrews 4: 9-16

Hebrews 4: 15 "For we have not an high priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities."

GOD knows!

We say it about many things which puzzle us. That is all we have to say about a lot of life's perplexities. God knows!

And what a comfort it ought to be to us that He does! He knows everything, knows some things about us which we do not know ourselves. He knows the future, the beginning and the end.

Think of all the pain and trouble which God went to, to know and understand us. He became incarnate. He took upon Him our human flesh. He got acquainted with all our human frailty and infirmity. That is the best account that anyone can give of Jesus, there on the Gospel pages: Jesus was God, learning what it means to be a mortal, letting Himself be touched with the feeling of man's infirmity, tempted as men are, yet never sinning.

God knows! We have an understanding God, who is tender toward our weakness, and able to save us to the uttermost. And although God is busy with His wholesale transactions, managing a universe, He is also ready to do a retail business with every trusting soul. And therefore we can say, Just as I am, I come.

O Heavenly Father, so rule our minds and hearts that we may not do anything to add to the sorrow of this world but rather with faith and patience to brighten the places where we live and toil; in Christ's Holy Name. Amen.

WEDNESDAY—March 17

Read: Hebrews 6: 1-10

Hebrews 6: 10 "For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labor of love."

IT is just that—unrighteous, to forget to say "I thank you," not to show a proper appreciation and try to make the best return we can.

Too many of the labors of love go unrequited, unacknowledged. They who love to be doing good get their best reward in doing it, not in being praised for it. Love never asks to be applauded. But that does not excuse those who are blessed by the love of others from saying so! Even parents sometimes feel the sting of unrequited love, and understand all too well the saying, "Sharper than a serpent's tooth it is to have a thankless child." It is a sorry way to live, to take the good things of life for granted and not for gratitude.

Better than wealth, better than genius, is the simple art of being kind. Nothing does more mischief in this world, not even war, not even pestilence, than the want of kindness.

However, whether or not we get credit for doing good in the Master's Name, there is One who does not forget. Men may be unrighteous, but God is always making note of any loving labor His children do, and writing them in the book of His remembrance.

Give us grace, O God, to remember how we have been blessed. Make us thankful for every good we have received at the hands of others, and especially for the gift of Christ; in His Name. Amen.

THURSDAY—March 18

Read: Hebrews 10: 24-31

Hebrews 10: 24 "Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and good works."

IF any of us are good for anything it is because others have provoked us into it, made us see that it was desirable. How much we owe to provocations of this sort!

It is not so much by good advice alone that we are provoked and stirred to live as Christians should. That depends upon who gives it! In matters of religious faith and courage, of making Christ our Saviour and our King, and so making the most of life, we are better off if somebody will not only give us his advice about it but also give us a demonstration of it.

The Christian life cannot be provoked in us by argument, unless the argument is warm with honest interest and affection. We see somebody living it. No lecture can be a substitute for the life.

We are all in need of much encouragement. We often feel the weakness of our love and good works. If anybody can provoke us into a better courage, into a clearer hope, we want to meet him! And if you can do that for someone who is faltering, do not tarry!

It's surely worth considering: Are we provoking anybody, and what to?

Thou seest, Lord, how closely Thy children live together, and how inevitably we put our mark on one another. Help us so to live that others may be led into the way of Christ; for His dear sake. Amen.

FRIDAY—March 19

Read: Hebrews 11: 1-12

Hebrews 11: 6 "He that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him."

SO there is a God!

It would be dreadful to have to think there is none, that the Bible is a book of lies, that Jesus was a deluded person who did not know what He was talking about, that the testimony of the saints all down the centuries is an empty fable which men have been tricked into believing without stopping to think it over. Either God is, or life is without support or reason, and the only answer to the question whether life is worth the living is: No! Let us eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die.

So overwhelming is the evidence that God exists that we do not even have the option of disbelieving in Him. It is written we "must" believe. No other faith can satisfy the deepest longing of our lives.

God not only lives, He is at home here in this world where we live. He is in the sunshine and the rain, the flowers and the stars. The pulses of His presence are in our hearts. He is not only the living but the loving God. And when we pray He listens. When we go to seek Him, lo, we find Him seeking us!

O Lord, give us this day the assurance and joy of faith, and help us to cherish that good part which the world can neither give nor take away. Let Thy will be our law, Thy love our song; for the sake of Christ. Amen.

SATURDAY—March 20

Read: Hebrews 13: 9-17

Hebrews 13: 9 "Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines."

HERE is a timely caution about taking up with cults of many kinds. Nearly all of them have a dab of truth and mark of plausibility. They sound good. But when you examine them, against the orthodox Christian faith, they are far from satisfying. And those who are swept off their feet by these religious nostrums are like ships without an anchor, carried about by winds and wrecked at last upon the rocks.

One can be orthodox without being bigoted and narrow. There are certain great and basic truths, in the creeds and the confessions of the Church, which time has tested and experience has confirmed. They will outlast these strange and fantastic notions of what we should believe. They have lasted now through many of the generations of man upon the earth, and it is not likely that the faddists will find their substitute, or their equal, in courage and encouragement for the human soul.

Be orthodox! That is to say, be loyal to the faith that has come down to us from Christ and His Apostles and found expression in the standard creeds of Christendom. Have no dealings with peddlers of new religions!

Our Heavenly Father, we thank Thee for the brave souls of long ago through whom Thou hast revealed the Gospel of our salvation and we beseech Thee to make us faithful to the same; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT—March 21

Read: St. Matthew 15: 21-28

St. Matthew 15: 25 "Lord, help me."

MANY short prayers are better than a few long ones. Of course, any amount of time we spend in prayer is good for us. Meditation takes time, quiet, and concentration. But there are moments of emergency when there is not much time to do more than say, Lord, help me; or, Lord, have mercy on me; or Lord, give me courage; or Lord, show me what to do about this. Sometimes the shortest prayer is the way to the longest answer.

Special prayers are better than general prayers. The woman had a desperate and special need. She was praying for her child. Do we pray for special blessings? Do we put the names of people in our prayers? Do we name the Church, the institution, the cause, which we want the Lord to bless? Do we pray in general or in particular?

A prayerful mind is better than minding only the times and seasons of our prayers. We ought to have our regular times to pray, and we ought to be on time in meeting these appointments which we have arranged. But there are "between-times," when prayer is the atmosphere, like a native element, in which we breathe and live.

O God, our Strength and the Hope of our salvation, help us to keep open the gate of prayer, through which we enter into Thy peace and refresh our spirits at the fountain of Thy blessing; we ask in Christ's Name. Amen.

MONDAY—March 22

Read: Acts 3: 1-10

Acts 3: 6 "Silver and gold have I none, but such as I have I give thee."

WE can be generous with little or nothing. And mercy is more than money. Of course, the Lord expects us to be generous with our money whether it be much or little. We will be judged at last by our pocketbooks as well as by our piety. The trouble is that many who are inclined to charity have not much wherewithal to be charitable, while there are others who have abundance but lack the generous inclination.

There is more than one way to be rich. The Apostles were so poor they could not drop a coin in the cripple's cup. But they were all the time among the richest people who ever lived. They had heaven in their hearts. They had pity in their souls. They had something that surpasses such things as silver and gold.

It was a better instance of the favor of God that this man was healed of his infirmity than that he should have gotten bags of gold and silver. He got a miracle instead of money.

We are expected to do good according to what we have. And the poorest of us have, by the grace of God, possessions of the spirit which we can share with others less fortunate than ourselves.

Almighty God, whose loving kindness is new unto us every morning, let Thy mercy make us merciful, and may we share generously of that which Thou givest us, to the increase of Thy Kingdom and Thy Glory; in Christ's Name. Amen.

TUESDAY—March 23

Read: Acts 4: 23-30

Acts 4: 23 "And being let go they went to their own company."

A MAN is known by the company he goes to, when he is let go, to go wherever he wants to.

Here are men who were given freedom. Their prison doors were open. They might have gone to their homes, or to an entertainment, or to a place of hiding. They might have gone into retirement, as they were warned to do. They went straight to a prayer meeting, to a house where their friends were praying for them.

That is safer than a bomb shelter. That is our best security—the company to which as Christians we belong. There are other places where we need to go. There are associations which are not escapable. We are in the world, but as Jesus said, not of the world. We have what we call the Communion—the fellowship, the Church.

Freedom to go where we want to go, freedom to do as we please with our money, with our time, our opportunities—is both a precious thing, and perilous. One of the greatest tests of character is what a man will do when the restraints are off, when he is at leisure to do as he pleases. What men do in their leisure time is more important to their destiny than what they do in their employments.

Lord, we thank Thee for Thy Church, whose Baptism has been laid upon our heads, at whose Altars we were Confirmed. Make us to be at home in the Church and in the strength and joy of our religion; for Jesus' sake. Amen.

WEDNESDAY—March 24

Read: Acts 5: 12-16

Acts 5: 15 "They brought forth the sick into the streets, that at the least, the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them."

WE do not know where Peter was going. He might have been going to a meeting. It may be that he was on his way to make the chief address at some sort of celebration. But it is certain that, without knowing it at the time, he was doing a lot more good passing along the street than he did with his fine oration. His shadow as it fell upon the sick brought them healing and release.

This is a parable of unconscious influence, of the shadow that is cast by every life as it passes by. No man liveth unto himself. Our worth to one another is determined not only by what we do, but also by what we are. "What you are speaks so loudly I cannot hear what you say."

This is a great encouragement to many of God's people, who are no good at making pretty speeches or at taking part in public meetings. They can go on living in the faith, being loyal to their high convictions, being brave in times of suffering, and sticking to their posts of duty. That's eloquence at its best! For others, seeing them, pick up courage. And their shadow turns to substance—the substance of spiritual health and hope.

Heavenly Father, give us courage for this day and a hopeful spirit as we face tomorrow. May we cause no one to falter by what they see in us. And keep us faithful to the end; through Christ. Amen.

THURSDAY—March 25

Read: Acts 5: 17-29

Acts 5: 29 "We ought to obey God rather than man."

WE do not like anybody to say "must" to us—unless we know they love us and seek our good. We are suspicious of tyrants and dictators.

However, we cannot live with might and valor without the "musts," without some great imperatives to pull us forward. We are not entirely free to live as we may choose to live. There are laws and customs we must obey. But there is a large area, between positive law and unfettered freedom, where conscience is the guide. It is here that wisdom rules—the wisdom that comes from God.

We cannot always do the things we want to do. That would lead to chaos. St. Paul found in Christ the great imperatives for his life, saying: The love of Christ constraineth me!

We know a Christian by the way he puts the first things first, not because there is a law to make him, but because the Lord has put into his heart the feeling that he ought to. As the Apostles said: "We ought to obey God rather than man." The question for the Christian is not Can I? or May I? but Ought I? Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness.

Teach us, O Lord, day by day, to ask what is Thy will in all we do, so that no half-truth, no compromising with our conscience may soil our soul and separate us from our calling as the servants of Thy Kingdom; in Christ's Name. Amen.

FRIDAY—March 26

Read: Acts 8: 26-39

Acts 8: 30 "And Philip ran."

PHILIP was in a hurry.

He was having a grand success among the Samaritans when he was summoned to drop everything and take the Gaza road going south. And he caught up with a chariot in which a man was journeying, puzzling over the meaning of his Bible. The Spirit told him to go and make up to this stranger and he instantly obeyed the voice. He ran, and in no time he had turned that chariot into a synagogue, as he explained the Scripture to the traveler.

The traveler was a high official of the government of Ethiopia. And it was all new to him, the words: "He was led as a sheep to the slaughter and like a lamb before his shearers is dumb so He openeth not His mouth." Many government people yet do not understand such things, thinking that the only way is noise and violence. There is need for hurrying to tell them. Philip ran.

There are not enough of us running now, to see that the Gospel gets a hearing and an explanation. Men are on the run to build up other ideas and philosophies. Are we enough in earnest about the Church and its message to the world.

Lord, save us from complacency, from thinking that the Kingdom of God will come somehow, without any of us doing anything about it, from being satisfied with small successes. Lord, stir us up to a better valor in Thy Cause; for Thy Name's sake. Amen.

SATURDAY—March 27

Read: Acts 9: 1-9

Acts 9: 6 "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?"

WHAT we ought to do is not always as plain to us as it was to the Apostle. The answer in his case was vivid and convincing, but in ours it is not always clear.

Sometimes our situation is uncertain. We want to do the right thing, the thing that God would call all right. But what is that thing? Lord, what must I do about it? And we are at our wit's end. We do not know what is best.

Perhaps the best thing to do is not to do anything at all for the moment, but wait and hope and trust. Some of our human situations call for a lot of patience!

We shall never get such things to do as God gave to His Apostle. He was a giant and had a giant's job. Yet in our simpler tasks, in our quieter and less heroic duties, we can have the same fidelity, the same desire to do our best, and to trust in God to use us for His glory and crown our humbler, halting efforts with His blessing.

First, ask the Lord what He would have you do. Go into conference with Him about it! Then, do what seems to you the best.

O Lord, who knowest our frame and rememberest that we are dust, enlighten us by Thy Spirit, that we may do what pleaseth Thee, and come at last to the reward of those who seek to do Thy will; through Jesus Christ. Amen.

THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT—
March 28

Read: St. Luke 11: 14-28

St. Luke 11: 25 "And when he cometh he findeth it swept and garnished."

WHO lives in your house?

Here is the tragic story of a house, which was a heart, which was a home, and the owner swept it up and cleaned out of it every bit of dirt—that is, of evil spirits—and then forgot to open it to other better spirits, to the Blessed Spirit who makes and keeps us clean. It is the tragedy of an empty house.

It is a great day when anybody cleans house, says to evil thoughts and dispositions, says to fears and doubtings, Get out! But it is also an evil day if he does not say to God, Come in! The best and safest way to cast out evil is to crowd it out with good.

You say, I will not think an ugly thought today. I will not do an unkindly deed. I will have nothing to do with anything today which might soil my soul. But the only way you can carry out these noble purposes is to fill your mind with thoughts of prayer and purity. The best way to keep from doing evil is to get busy doing good.

This is being Christian—letting Christ live in us. With such a Tenant living in our house, it will abide forever.

Give us diligence, O God, to keep our hearts clean with thoughts of well-doing and goodwill. Occupy us with Thy Spirit, that no evil may invade us, and come not to sojourn but to abide with us forever; for the love of Christ. Amen.

MONDAY—March 29

Read: Acts 15: 36-41

Acts 15: 36 "Let us go again."

MUCH of our life is described in that word, "again." We will be doing today, again, what we were doing yesterday and in the tomorrows we will be going again at very much the same employments. How can we keep routine from robbing us of the zest of life?

Of course, every life is high-lighted by its grand occasions, by its special and unusual diversions. But for the most part life is a monotony, doing the same things over and over again.

Yet it is here that we will likely find our clearest happiness. It's God's will! It is not in our grand occasions but in our quiet loyalties in the routines of our life that God finds us at our best. He helps us find His will in what we do. And that will keep us glad even in the midst of drudgery. He has promised that if we are faithful in the least things we shall be rewarded just as surely as when we do the big things.

Let us always seek the glory of God in all we do, and do our duty in cheerfulness of spirit. Make an adventure out of living well and living valiantly, and we shall find that the most important gains in life are in its agains.

God, our Father, we ask Thee to help us to live courageously, so that duty may not be drudgery, so that our strength may not leave us nor our vision fade in the heat and burden of the day; for the Master's sake. Amen.

TUESDAY—March 30

Read: Acts 22: 1-10

Acts 22: 10 "And the Lord said unto me."

ONLY a few people will ever have so vivid an experience as the Prophets and Apostles had. The majority of us must be content to hear God speak through them to us.

It is said of the angels that they do His commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His words. Oh, to be an angel, not by and by, but now! How needful—this hearkening to the Voice, however it may come, and then like angels, do the will! The hearing ear, the willing heart!

Someone has said that life is spent in learning the meaning of great words. And the greatest of them are the words of the Saviour Christ. Never man spake as He. All down the years men have wrestled with His words, to understand the meaning of them. We have not yet mastered His words. But how they master us, and at the sound of them we can say, with the Apostle: "The Lord said unto me!"

One of the best prayers we can ever make is, Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth. Never mind if there is no audible sound for us in the Voice of God. "He that hath the word of Jesus can hear His silence also."

O Thou, who hast spoken to us in Thy Prophets and more especially in Thy blessed Son, our Saviour, forbid that Thy Voice should speak to us in vain. Make us hearers of Thy Word, and doers also; through the Same, Jesus, our Lord. Amen.

WEDNESDAY—March 31

Read: Acts 23: 1-11

Acts 23: 11 "The Lord stood by him and said, Be of good cheer."

WE know what it means to have somebody standing by us, to keep us strong and steady—somebody who believes in us when we are at the point of not believing in ourselves. Poor indeed is anyone who can say, I have nobody to stand by me. And even poorer is anyone with such conceit as to say, I can make it by myself, I have no need of anybody standing by me.

God has a way of standing by His people, those who trust Him and take His work into their hands. The Apostle was in immediate danger. He had been almost pulled to pieces by the mob. The commander had to hide him in the castle from their violence. And in the night, not knowing what the morrow had in store for him, the Lord came and stood by him!

There are times when all is dark, dark as night, when it looks as if the sun will never shine again. It is in such grievous hours that our Lord, in answer to our prayers, comes and stands by us.

And the Lord's word to all disheartened folk, to all who find life hard and its burdens heavy, is: "Be of good cheer. I have overcome the world."

Fear not, I am with thee, O be not dismayed!
For I am thy God and will still give thee aid.
I'll strengthen thee, help thee and cause thee to stand
Upheld by my righteous, omnipotent hand. Amen.

THURSDAY—April 1

Read: Acts 24: 10-16

Acts 24: 16 "Herein I exercise myself to have a conscience void of all offense toward God and man."

MOST of us want to do the right thing. But what is right and what is wrong? These are sometimes difficult and puzzling questions.

We can usually say what is useful at the moment, what is popular and agreeable, what will fit into the general situation. We can think what everybody thinks and do what everybody does. Far too often the only conscience many people have is the conscience of the crowd.

But God expects us to "exercise ourselves" to have a conscience of our own. We may not all agree in every instance, in such matters. The sinful thing is not to care at all whether a thing is right or wrong, to do it without asking whether it measures up to the best we know of God and His commandments.

A good conscience is something that looks to the Word of God for light and guidance in its decisions. It looks to what we know of life as it has been lived by those whom the will of God has stirred. It looks to Jesus, asking what He would have us do.

Let this mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus—that is having a good conscience.

O God, send Thy light into our hearts, and help us to know what we ought to do, and that we may walk safely let Thy Word be the lamp of our feet and the light of our path; through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

FRIDAY—April 2

Read: Acts 26: 19-32

Acts 26: 19 "I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision."

DID you ever have a vision?

We do not mean an ecstasy, an emotional convulsion in things religious. That high experience comes to few, and God does not expect it of us all. Ecstasies, such as Paul had, are not good things for the run of us. They are likely to leave us flat, exhausted.

Yet all of us have had visions of a vital sort. We have had a look at certain things that have gladdened us to our depths and galvanized us into a braver faith and a better hope. We have seen virtue! We have seen sacrifice! We have had a look at loveliness being lived before our eyes. We have had our visions of people who live so sweetly and live so bravely that they make us think of God. We have had a sight of God in people who have had the love of God upon them.

Such visions are good for us. First of all, they shame us. And then they cleanse us with their beauty.

No man has seen God at any time. No man could endure the sight! Yet if it were not for these reflections of Him, these touches of the heavenly in the human, we could not endure to live.

Grant us, Good Lord, such visions as are good for us, and so build up our courage and increase our faith that we may be ever loyal to our royal calling as Thy believers; through Christ. Amen.

SATURDAY—April 3

Read: Acts 28: 17-31

Acts 28: 24 "Some believed the things which were spoken and some believed not."

IT is always so.

Were there more believers than unbelievers, or the other way around? They do not give the figures. The early Church was not as bothered about statistics as we have come to be. The faith was more important than the figures.

Probably the believers were the few, the unbelievers the many. But the minorities with God have always been more powerful than the majorities without Him. Jesus had only twelve disciples in the beginning. The Reformation started with but a handful of men whom the Spirit had awakened. Numbers do not tell all the story. The thing that counts is the quality of the consecration, of the commitment to the cause.

We look about and see the multitudes, not in God's temple, but in the temples of iniquity, big crowds at their amusements and little crowds at their religion. But the cause of freedom, of brotherhood, peace, and justice, is in the hands of the "Some" who believe and not in the "Some" who do not believe.

Be for God and His Church, and you may belong to a minority in numbers which will become the majority in power.

Strong Son of God, we rejoice in Thee and the promise of Thy Kingdom. Let Thy Spirit be upon us to strive earnestly for those things which Thou lovest, that Thy Kingdom may come gloriously to all men; in Thy Name we pray. Amen.

FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT—April 4

Read: St. John 6: 1-15

St. John 6: 5 "Whence shall we buy bread that these may eat."

IT was obvious they could do nothing about it. Food for all these crowds! It was impossible. Let them look out for themselves. But it is not Christlike not to bother about human need. Bear ye one another's burdens and so fulfil the law of Christ. And if we spurn the burden which love imposes on us we spurn the love.

It is one of the ways the Lord deals with us—to face us with the impossible, as He did the Twelve upon the plain. Whence shall we buy the bread? Whence shall we get the strength to weather the storm? Impossible! But the Lord sees to it that if the task is beyond our power we shall have power beyond the task.

Situations change when Christ comes into them, situations in the home, in life relationships, in human contacts. The impossibles turn to possibles. When we leave Him out the outlook is discouraging, crushing. Bring Christ in and the outlook brightens. He is greater than our burden.

Do not give way to the feeling that it is hopeless. Let us offer the little that we have and God will make the best of it.

O God, who knowest the duties which lie ahead of us, the dangers which confront us, and the weakness which besets us, add Thy mighty power to our little strength and if we falter lift us up again; in the Master's Name. Amen.

MONDAY—April 5

Read: Psalm 27

Psalm 27:5 "For in the time of trouble He shall hide me in His pavilion; in the secret of His tabernacle shall He hide me; He shall set me on a rock."

THERE is bound to be trouble, more or less. And David is not telling us how to escape it, but how to face it. He is not saying how to hide from trouble but how to handle it. He has just been saying in his psalm that life is like a battlefield, and how war had risen up against him—so difficult it was sometimes to carry on. It seemed to him that a host was encamped against him. But he had found in God a way to manage trouble. And no host whatever could overthrow him while the Lord of Hosts was with him.

All the best things come through suffering. At the root of every blessing is the soil of anguish. If we succeed without suffering it is because somebody else has done the suffering. If we suffer without succeeding it is that somebody else might succeed who will come after us.

God will use our trouble to bring us into the secret of His tabernacle, that is, into His Presence, the pavilion of His promises, where He listens to our prayers and whence He sends His Spirit into our hearts.

O Thou, our God, who art Lord of the storm and calm, of the vexed sea and the quiet haven, grant that, our hearts being stayed on Thee, we may not be overcome by any fear; for Jesus' sake. Amen.

TUESDAY—April 6

Read: Psalm 40

Psalm 40: 1 "I waited patiently for the Lord and He inclined unto me and heard my cry."

IT is a major mania with people in this modern world to expect things in a hurry. It is unwillingness to wait. Our forefathers were satisfied to wait until they got the weekly paper, to see the news. Nowadays we get furious "if we miss one section of a revolving door." We lack the gentle art of patience.

Nothing is more important to our peace and progress in the Christian life than the cultivation of a patient mind. We need much patience with ourselves, with the conditions under which we have to live. What's the use lamenting the things we cannot help! As a wise man said: "When I see the inevitable I fall in love with it."

And we need patience with other people. For doubtless they need a lot of it when they think of us!

And certainly we need to be patient with God too. He is more willing to give good gifts to His children than they are to ask Him. He knows best what to give us and when to give it. If He seems to tarry with the answer to our prayers, learn to wait. The best blessing God can give us is the patience to wait until the blessing comes. Let God take His time!

Father in Heaven, help us to possess our souls in patience, however we are tempted and provoked, and blessings long desired are delayed, and grant that we may not be overcome with evil, but overcome evil with good: for Christ's sake. Amen.

WEDNESDAY—April 7

Read: Psalm 72

Psalm 72: 12 "For He will deliver the needy when he crieth and the poor that hath no helper."

CAN we count on that?

For none of us is without his need, none of us without his poverty, not only poverty of purse but poverty of spirit. The poor that hath no helper! There are poverties which no human helper can relieve.

Days come when our need of strength is desperate. We seem to be touching bottom and wonder if we can go on. It may be a sorrow, or a disappointment, or just the drudgery of life, that has brought us down. And at such a time it is well to remember that the Lord shall deliver the needy when he crieth. We can be sure of the love of God—sure that nothing can take away His love, and He will keep us from being quitters on our job.

Life itself is never hurt by trouble. Life does not depend, for quality, on the things we lack or the luxuries we have. Life depends on what we are, and on what the Great Artificer can make out of us. What if the worst comes, and what if we do touch bottom? God can turn the worst into the best, if we will trust in Him. He can turn burdens into wings, drudgery into song.

O Thou, whose grace doth ever keep us and whose love can never fail, save us in times of weariness from giving up, and reconcile us to the cross we carry, and heal our poverties with the riches of Christ; in His Name. Amen.

THURSDAY—April 8

Read: Psalm 84

Psalm 84:2 "My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God."

HERE is a man on his way to worship, and he is thrilled about it. He is expecting things to happen to him.

What happens when we worship in God's House? Not much, unless we go there with relish and desire, looking for a blessing. It has been said that people who go to church are no better than those who don't. A reckless thing to say! Yet it may be true at that—if they do not really worship when they go. Worship is a matter of the willing and expectant heart.

Let a man go to church as a participant, not a mere spectator, to feel for sixty minutes the claims of reverence and clean emotion, and something great will happen to him! Such things as happen nowhere else in all this world!

Too many people in our times are not believing much in the worth of worship. They are worshiping their little gods of convenience and gain. But what a time it is for us to crowd around the altars of our God! It is there, in the high communions of the House of God, we learn to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with the Lord.

O Thou, who dwellest not in temples made with hands, yet deignest to meet with us in Thy sacred courts and to bless us from Thy mercy seat, help us to worship Thee with a glad and thankful heart; in the Redeemer's Name. Amen.

FRIDAY—April 9

Read: Psalm 139

Psalm 139: 9-10 "If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall Thy hand lead me and Thy right hand shall hold me."

YOU cannot escape God.

No one, of course, should ever think of escaping Him. We should rather try to find Him and recognize Him, and pledge ourselves to His obedience. But if anyone should be foolish and come to the conclusion that God is nowhere in particular and uncaring about His creatures, such a person should see to it that his idea of God is radically revised.

The Psalmist is not thinking that God is hard to find. He is thinking that He is near and easily entreated. And He is rejoicing in the divine protection, in the Love that will not let him go.

God is everywhere. He is certainly in the natural world, in the flowers, in the stars, in the sunshine and the rain. And if we do not see Him in His creation it is not likely we will see Him in His dealings with the human spirit.

And He is in every heart of faith. There is no accounting for the saints and martyrs, nor for humbler folk who have believed, but by the Presence of the Lord, in His people's hearts. God is with us here as He will be with us in the hereafter. Hold on to God, and He will hold you!

We thank Thee, Lord, for Thy strong hand to steady us when we stumble, to lift us when we fall. Help us to know Thee in all of our necessities. May we never pray in vain; for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

SATURDAY—April 10

Read: Psalm 141

Psalm 141: 3 "Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips."

CONTROL your tongue!

As nature has made our lips the door to our words, pray God to keep that door!

It is through words that much damage is done —and also much good.

Too often people are cruelly, flippantly, critical. They like to rip reputation to rags. They attribute to others the lowest motives. They like to listen to the worst. They are cynical toward unselfishness. They repeat ill-founded stories. They glory in gossip. There would be less gossip in the world if more of us were less inclined to listen to it.

We are as responsible for the unkind things we listen to as for the unkind things we speak.

The trouble with too many people is that they let their tongues run in high while their conscience is in neutral.

A careless tongue can sometimes wreck a life, as a small blaze can destroy a forest. A lie can ruin a career.

Out of the heart the mouth speaketh. It is out of our thoughts, as from a fountain, words flow. Keep the thought of others generous, and the words will be wise and kindly.

Forgive us, O Lord, if we have wounded others with careless and bitter words, if we have been contemptuous of other people, if we have lacked charity, and do Thou henceforth keep the door of our lips; in Christ's Name. Amen.

PASSION SUNDAY—April 11

Read: St. John 8: 46-59

St. John 8: 57 "Thou art not yet fifty years old."

THEY made a poor guess. He was only about thirty-three. Yet He was wiser for His age than they.

We all grow old, in time, and there is nothing much to do about it, except to keep young in spirit. Hair grows grayer and steps grow slower, as the years wear on. But Autumn has its beauty as well as Spring—its own loveliness and color.

No one needs to grow old in spirit, or to complain that things have changed and are not what they used to be. We can make ourselves most unhappy with thinking how different the laws and customs are, how different the world is, and the government, and the Church, not to mention the new generation which has come upon the scene.

Think, rather, that the goodness of God does not change. That shines upon the old and young alike. And we can wake up every morning saying, I wonder what new blessing God is sending me today.

They say a man is as old as his arteries. Say rather that he is as old as his soul. Try to grow old gracefully, and face the future with a brave heart. "The best is yet to be—the last of life, for which the first was made."

Almighty God, with whom one day is as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day, put eternity into our hearts, so that there will be light at eventide, when our work is finished and our day is done; in Christ's Name. Amen.

MONDAY—April 12

Read: Isaiah 12: 1-6

Isaiah 12: 2 "Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid."

WHAT if fear were the only motive by which to live? Suppose it read, Fear is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen? There would be no more valor in us, no more daring and adventure, no more trusting either God or one another. Good Lord, deliver us!

How can we keep from being afraid? Today we are terribly afraid, afraid of what is coming next, afraid of making mistakes, afraid of doing anything except what everybody else is doing, afraid of the future, of ourselves, and even of God! Many people are just holding on with a sort of desperation, hoping against hope!

Is it not too sad for words? Is it not a sorry thing for us Christians to be worrying? Things are bad and maybe they will get worse before they turn to getting better. But should we not be saying now, with the saintly prophet, God is my salvation!

Freshen up your faith! Your faith is the only thing that can unshackle you from your fears. Sweeten the bitter cup with trust in the righteous and friendly will of God. Faith is being free to expect great things from God and to do great things for Him.

Most gracious God, whose will towards us for our good is greater than our prayer, save us lest we surrender to our pessimisms. Give us a joyful faith in Thee and in Thy righteous and holy will; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son. Amen.

TUESDAY—April 13

Read: Isaiah 28: 14-22

Isaiah 28: 20 "The bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself on it, and the covering narrower than that he can wrap himself in it."

NOT very comfortable!

Neither is the man who is refusing to give in to God, thinking that he is good enough. He may look comfortable. He may seem content. But in the vivid language of the Prophet he is like a man whose bed is too short for him, whose covering does not cover.

We have a right to be as comfortable as we can. But you ask the question, How? And the Prophet answers, Put God into your calculations. For only as we have the sense of God can we have any comfort in such a world as this.

Much that was customary and familiar to us is passing away. We look on at the changes with no little apprehension. We can hardly believe our eyes. And we are anything but easy in our minds. All is lost! we think. All is ruin! we exclaim.

Whence is comfort now? It is that God may be removing the things that are shaken, man-made things, in order that the things which God made, that cannot be shaken, may remain.

That bed of faith, in a righteous God, is not too short, nor is that faith too narrow to cover us.

Merciful God, to whom else can we go, for Thou only canst lift us up and comfort us, in the upheaval of these times. Put a song of hope into our hearts; we ask in Jesus' Name. Amen.

WEDNESDAY—April 14

Read: Isaiah 33: 13-17

Isaiah 33: 17 "Thine eyes shall behold the King in His beauty."

PROVIDED you have an eye for beauty!

That does not mean that one must be an expert, in appreciation of the lofty and the lovely. It means that we are likely to see such things only if we look for them, only if we turn our eyes in their direction. Not all of us can be artists, but all of us can wish we were. Beauty is discovered by those who lovingly desire it.

Life is beautiful—to those who want to make it so. And there are lots of beautiful people! Not merely pretty. There are beautiful people who are not pretty at all. There are people with such poise, such genuineness and good judgment, with such grace and charity of spirit, with such steadiness and trust in God, that to see them is to see a vision and to dream a dream.

Someone after reading Ruskin said, What a beautiful mind the man has! That is where beauty is—in the mind. It shows up in lovely paintings, lovely landscapes, but also in humbler matters, like sewing a patch, writing a letter, saying the right thing to the right person at the right time.

In lives lived beautifully we behold the King!

Forgive us, Lord, the things we think and do that mar Thy image in us, and so purify our hearts and bring us to the obedience of Thy Spirit that we may help to build Thy Kingdom; in the Holy Name of Jesus. Amen.

THURSDAY—April 15

Read: Isaiah 41: 10-20

Isaiah 41: 10 "Fear thee not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed for I am thy God; I will strengthen thee, yea, I will help thee; Yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness."

WHAT a God—to talk like that!

This God of ours is so friendly and available, always ready with His right hand to hold us up. And how we often need holding up!

What would you think of anybody who abandoned a religion of such encouragement and hope? Yet there are people who think that Christ's religion is for sunny days and not for days of strain and sorrow. Here is a man who seemed to get a lot of joy out of his Christian faith. He took a generous part in everything. Then trouble came, with business failure, and he went from riches to poverty. He said to his pastor: "Take my name off. I'm through!" Abandoning his religion just when he was needing it the most!

God is our Almighty Friend, in fair weather and in foul. He knoweth our frame and remembereth that we are dust. He is never so near as when we need Him most. In the brightest hour, and in the darkest, God will not abandon us. He will stay with us to the end, until morning dawns and sorrows flee away.

Gracious God, who dost bring salvation to them that trust Thee, grant that unbelief may not break our faith in Thee. Have Thy way with us, Lord, and with our tangled world; through Jesus our Lord. Amen.

FRIDAY—April 16

Read: Isaiah 43: 1-11

Isaiah 43: 2 "When thou passeth through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee."

LIFE treats us pretty well, and the most of us have little to complain of. The little upsets, and the tiny rubs and frets hardly count. Life is for the most part splashing through the waters of a mountain brook.

But there are certain, too, to be rivers, in raging torrent, that we have to cross. How will we survive the angry waters, which threaten to overflow us—events like ill health, sudden loss or disappointment. You can't splash through them! Things happen which make us peevish toward the ones who love us best, that make us push aside our religion, that make us cross with God, that He should do such things to us!

Here is a promise for us, which the Prophet plucked from the garden of his own experience. God is there, in the midst of the raging waters, keeping them from overwhelming us. The stars shine brightest on the darkest night. Someone says, Grace grows best in winter.

Put your faith to work, not only in the shallow water but the deep. Whatever happens, know this: We have a wonderful God! He is a God who can be trusted!

O Thou, who art the author of our days, help us on this day to prove Thy loving care for us and all Thy children and may we trust in Thee in whom all true joys are found; in the Name of Christ. Amen.

SATURDAY—April 17

Read: Isaiah 55: 1-13

Isaiah 55: 1 "Ho, everyone that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk, without money and without price."

YET there is nothing cheap about this offer!

It cost God a tremendous price to furnish this refreshment—this feast to save us from our famine. It cost the sacrifice of the sweetest, noblest life that was ever lived! It cost the Cross. And all of that is ours if we will take it—the comfort and the grace of Christ.

We are to come to Christ, who is the fountain of living waters. Come to the holy ordinances of your religion, to the streams which are forever making glad the city of our God. Come to what may seem to you as plain and simple things, like water, but water which God will turn to wine!

These are healing waters—these practices of the Christian faith. These are living waters—this communion with the Lord in prayer, this toiling in His vineyard. Jesus said, If any man thirst let him come unto me and drink.

This is doubtless the strangest bargain in the world—and the best! How can we buy, not only without money, but without any promise of it? Well, the blessings of God are already bought and paid for, and it is a bargain you will never need to rue!

Bring us, O God, to the wells of Thy salvation, to the living waters which cleanse us of our sins, and to Christ whose Life of Love is a well of water springing up unto eternal life; for His sake. Amen.

PALM SUNDAY—April 18

Read: St. Matthew 21: 1-9

St. Matthew 21: 4 "All this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet."

WE need this glimpse of Christ.

We might get the idea that our Master was always in retreat, passively enduring His hostilities, always on the defense, never driving onward to the attack. Yet all the time He was sweeping on in victory, reaching for His crown, which was a cross.

Palm Sunday, with its gallantry and song, was in the prophecies. They predicted other things about Him—the suffering, the smiting, but they saw also down the years this glory of Messiah, blazing up, and they heard the hosannas ring.

We must stop singing to the Lord in the minor key. We must say to one another, Behold, the King! This is no "pale Galilean" whom we follow. He is the strong Son of God, the Invincible.

It is the shout of victory we want to hear these days. We need the courage of it, a share in the Lord's Processional. There can be no doubt, no fear, no trembling, no despair, to those who believe that God in Christ is with them.

Rejoice, therefore, in these days of seeming disaster and defeat. Lift up your hearts! Never worry, never fret, God is not done with this old world yet!

O God, the Strength of the weak, the Comforter of the sorrowful, and the Friend of sinners, help us to build on the strong foundation, which is Christ, and brighten our lives with a victorious hope; in Jesus Name. Amen.

MONDAY—April 19

Read: St. Matthew 26: 14-25

St. Matthew 26: 23 "He that dippeth his hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me."

THEIR hands in the same dish!

The Saviour's hand—which had touched the blind and made them see, which had been laid in blessing on the heads of little children, which had been raised in blessing on the multitude. The traitor's hand—which was about to hold the silver for which he had betrayed his Friend and sold his own dark soul away. Such two hands, touching, dipping in the same dish!

That was the cross before the Cross—the cross of knowing that His disciple should so degrade himself. That was a bitterness in His cup—to look into the heart of Judas, and find it black.

But just the same, He thrust His hand in and shared the dish with Judas—a man who was betraying Him. Having loved His own He loved them to the end.

It was not a Pharisee who betrayed Jesus, but one of His Chosen Twelve—a man whom He had trusted, a man with whom He had held sweet counsel and in whose company He had gone into the House of God. How terrible, that any man should keep his sin while he puts his hand into the dish with Him whose love is breathing on his heart.

O Christ, our Saviour, be with us in these days of Holy Week, to make us mindful of Thy sorrows and Thy sacrificial pains, and melt our hearts into a greater love for Thee and Thy Kingdom; for Thy Name's Sake. Amen.

TUESDAY—April 20

Read: St. Matthew 26: 26-35

St. Matthew 26: 30 "And when they had sung a hymn they went out unto the Mount of Olives."

ON to the Cross, singing!

It is good to know that Jesus sang as He went forth to Calvary. In the volume of the Book it is written of Him that He delighted to do the will of God. He was not merely resigned to die upon the Cross for our salvation, as though it were an ordeal He could not shirk. He was resolved to do it! He made a song of it! He made great music out of His mission, to give Himself a ransom for our sins.

How do we go forth to our Olivets? Is it with laggard steps or songs? With a sense of drudgery, or delight? Is our Christian life a burden or a boon? Are we happy in our discipleship to the Master? Are we glad about it?

There are days when we do not feel like singing, when the sun is hidden behind the clouds. The best of people have had their seasons of depression. But with God's help they have always come back singing.

We never know when we shall have a cross to carry. There may be one waiting for us. But if it be the will of God for us to carry it, we will carry it—with a song!

Jesus, our Lord, share Thy courage with us and as we go forth to another day may there be singing in us, since Thou art on our side to make us brave to win the crown; and the glory be to Thee. Amen.

WEDNESDAY—April 21

Read: St. Matthew 26: 47-56

St. Matthew 26: 50 "And Jesus said, Friend, wherefore art thou come?"

HE had not come to pray.

Judas had been this way before. He had come with Jesus and the Twelve at other times to pray with them in the quiet of the olive trees. This had been a trysting place for them, in other days, a sacred rendezvous. Wherefore now art thou come, Judas? Come to join us in our prayers? Come to comfort me in my distress? Come to cheer me in my sorrow?

Alas, that was not at all the reason why this "friend" had come this time. He had come to the familiar grove, where formerly he had prayed, to turn a little heaven into a hell, of retribution and remorse! Wherefore art thou come? It was not as friend, but traitor. He had come to give his Lord the traitor's kiss!

It looked so friendly—that kiss. And it fooled the other disciples. There's our friend, Judas! But had Peter known what Judas was up to doing he would have slashed at him instead of the servant of the high priest.

You have to be a good hypocrite before you can be a good traitor. But though hypocrites fool others they do not fool God!

Saviour of men, who didst suffer the traitor's kiss and didst consent to be humiliated before Thy enemies, teach us also to be patient and forgiving, and to endure evil that good may come; for Thy dear sake. Amen.

THURSDAY—April 22

Read: St. Matthew 26: 57-68

St. Matthew 26: 58 "And Peter followed Him afar off to see the end."

BUT he did not see it! Not the end of Jesus! There is no end of Him!

Of course, there was an end to these proceedings against the Saviour—a bloody end. They culminated in a Cross. But that was only the beginning of His empire, who turned the cross into a throne.

Others besides the Apostle have looked to see the end of Christ and Christianity. People have despaired at times, in the dark ages of the Church, and moaned, That's the last of Him! So it might have seemed when they laid Him in the grave. It's all over now! But Easter followed Good Friday and Jesus was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead.

The funeral of the Christian Faith has been predicted more than once, in the course of history, but as in Reformation days, there was resurrection, there was revival. And even in our own day it may seem to some that Christianity cannot possibly survive.

Let us take heart! Take counsel of your faith, not your fears. They that wait to see the end of Christ and the defeat of His religion will surely wait in vain.

Beautiful Saviour, King of Creation, beautiful in Thy passion as in Thy compassion, we will take heart, remembering Thee. Do Thou reign over us and gather us at last before Thy great white throne; Amen.

FRIDAY—April 23

Read: St. Matthew 27: 34-53

St. Matthew 27: 36 "And sitting down they watched Him there."

THEY did not only watch to see that no one interfered with the proceedings. They could hardly watch a death like that without thinking that men did not usually die that way, with such calm, such unearthly patience, such forgiveness on their lips.

They did not fully understand the miracle that was going on before their eyes. It is not likely that they understood the meaning of that Cross. But we may be sure that into their brutal souls there stole a reverence, an awe, as they sat and watched Him there. Why, they heard Him pray for them!

So on Good Friday we also watch the Saviour on the Cross, and listen to His words of wisdom and of love. We watch Him in other beautiful and heroic things He did—quieting the angry sea, feeding the hungry multitudes, blessing the little children. But we would miss the glory of the Lord if we did not also watch Him on His Cross, and see Him there, dying that we might be forgiven, that we might go at last to Heaven, saved by His precious blood.

God grant we shall not watch Him there in vain!

Christ on the Cross, it is for us Thou art suffering there, for all the wayward and the lost, for a wicked world. We mourn the sins that nailed Thee there. Remember us when Thou comest into Thy Paradise. Amen.

SATURDAY—April 24

Read: St. Matthew 27: 54-66

St. Matthew 27: 58 "Joseph went to Pilate and begged the body of Jesus."

IT is not likely that he needed to do much begging. Pilate was hardly happy over what had happened. That man was not guilty! He found no fault in Him. He had not yielded easily to the clamor. And when Joseph came to ask permission to give the Lord an honorable burial, Pilate was likely very glad to have a share in the occasion, to atone a little for the guilt he had put upon his conscience, in sending that innocent man to death. He joined with Joseph in doing honor to the Saviour in His death which they had both omitted doing in His life.

We say it is better late than never, to do the will of God. But every time we postpone a duty, put it off to a more convenient season, we have reason to be sorry. "Of all sad words of tongue or pen the saddest are: It might have been." How many things we planned to do and did not! How many words of appreciation we had a mind to say and left unsaid! Perhaps now it is too late, the chance is gone.

Beware of putting off! Remember Joseph, sitting at the tomb, thinking: How much I could have done for Him!

Dear Lord and Master, who didst rest and slumber in the grave, by Thy death and burial take away our sin, and awaken us to a clean desire to serve Thy Kingdom and glorify Thy Name. Amen.

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Read: St. Matthew 28: 1-10

St. Matthew 28: 5-6 "Ye seek Jesus who was
cified. He is not here, for He is risen."

IT was hard for them at first, to believe
Lord was risen from the dead. How could s
things be! But slowly the evidence came
Slowly they awakened to the mighty fact of
Resurrection. And they were certain of it. T
saw Him afterward with their own eyes.
their faith was turned into a festival, as t
realized that Jesus who had died was now a
—alive forevermore!

Easter is more than a date upon the calen
It is more than a service in the church, v
floral and musical display. It is all of these,
more than these. It is an awakening in the h
to the miracle of life. Easter is the seal of
Christian's certainty that Jesus lives and that
shall live also.

There was no one in that tomb when the
ciples came, at early morn, to seek Him. T
came with tears to find Him. They went a
with a song of triumph: He is risen!

Easter gives reality to the world beyond. J
lives there! And as we live with Him here
we shall live with Him and our loved ones
the hereafter.

The strife is o'er, the battle done!
The victory of life is won!
The song of triumph hath begun. Alleluia!
The three sad days are quickly sped,
He rises glorious from the dead.
All glory to our Risen Head. Alleluia!

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